THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY AND SPACE (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The suspension of operation of the demonstration plant for radiation processing of spices at Vashi was due to some procedural lapses observed by the inspection team of Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) during their visit to the facility on 26 June, 2001.

(c) the procedural lapses were of a technical nature including the unsatisfactory performance of a component of an Audio-Alarm system, and not due to any human error. Adequate remedial measures have been taken to the satisfaction of the AERB inspection team.

(d) the plant has started functioning normally with effect from 17-7-2001.

Gene modified food items in Indian Market

469. DR. MAHESH CHANDRA SHARMA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards the news-item published in "Navbharat Times" dated 20th June, under the caption "Gene Sanshodhit Khadya Padarthon kee Bhartiya Bazar Main Avaidh Ghuspaith Se Chinta'; and

(b) what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) set up under the Rule 4 of the Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro-organisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells 1989, under the environment (Protection) Act, 1986 has not accorded approval for import of any genetically modified food in the country.

Amendment in Sugar Development Board Rules

470. SHRI R.S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to amend the Sugar Development Board

Rules and are considering to give permission to sugar factories to generate power;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has assessed the power generating capacity of sugar factories in the country;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps proposed to encourage sugar industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD: (a) and (b) Government has under consideration proposals to make amendments to the Sugar Development Fund Act, 1982 and the Sugar Development Fund rules, 1983 to provide for making loans for facilitating bagasse based cogeneration of power.

(c) and (d) As per information available, about 3500 MW of power could be generated from existing sugar mills through optimum cogeneration.

(e) The following steps have been taken by Government to liberalise the sugar sector as an encouragement to the sugar industry:

(a) Government has delicensed the sugar industry. The entrepreneurs are free to set up a new sugar mill of any capacity or expand the capacity of their existing mills according to their best commercial judgement. The only stipulation prescribed by the Government is that the radial distance between an existing sugar factory and a proposed sugar factory should not be less than 15 kms.

(b) Government has decided to decontrol the sugar industry in a phased manner. The levy obligation was reduced from 40% to 30% with effect from 1-1-2000. Government has further reduced the levy obligation from 30% to 15% with effect from 1-2-2001.

(c) Government has liberalised the sugar trade and lifted the stock holdings limit on the recognised dealers of sugar.

(d) There were restrictions on sale of at least 47.5% of monthly free sale quota during each fortnight. Government has removed the said restriction. Further, Government has also allowed the sugar factories to sell up to 10% of the monthly free-sale quota in the succeeding month subject to the condition that the sale should be effected by 7th of the succeeding month.

In order to boost export of sugar, Government has taken the following steps:

(a) The sugar meant for export has been exempted from the levy obligation. This exemption, which was initially available for a period of six months, commencing from 1st June, 2000, has been extended upto 30.9.2001.

(b) It has been decided to treat the quantity exported for commercial exports as advance free sale release to be adjusted after a period of 12 months from the date of release.

(c) It has been decided that the levy exemption on the quantity of sugar meant for commercial exports, if it cannot be availed by the sugar factory out of 1999-2000 season's production due to the completion of its levy obligation, the same may be availed by the concerned sugar factory from the production in the ensuing sugar season.

(d) DEPB at the rate of 5% of the FOB value of exports sugar has been allowed.

In addition to the above Government also has under consideration proposals of making loans at concessional rates of interest for the rehabilitation of potentially viable sick sugar factories and to defray expenditure on internal transport and freight charges on export shipments of sugar.

Import of edible oil

471. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) how much edible oil was imported during the last three years togetherwith the details of tonnage and value in rupees;

(b) what measures are being taken to encourage farmers to shift to oilseeds cultivation; and

(c) whether it is a fact that oilseeds, cultivating farmers have incurred losses during the last three years; and if so, how Government propose to help such farmers financially?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA